KAMALESWAR BHATTACHARYA

ONCE MORE ON TWO PASSAGES OF THE PĀLI CANON

- 1. viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbatopabhaṃ¹, taṃ paṭhaviyā paṭhavattena ananubhūtaṃ, āpassa āpattena ananubhūtaṃ, tejassa tejattena ananubhūtaṃ, vāyassa vāyattena ananubhūtaṃ, bhūtānaṃ bhūtattena ananubhūtaṃ, devānaṃ devattena ananubhūtaṃ... sabbassa sabbattena ananubhūtaṃ².
- 2. viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbatopabhaṃ¹/
 ettha āpo ca paṭhavī tejo vāyo na gādhati//
 ettha dīghañ ca rassañ ca aṇuṃ-thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ/
 ettha nāmañ ca rūpañ ca asesaṃ uparujjhati//
 viññāṇassa nirodhena etth' etaṃ uparujjhati/³

Some thirty years ago I read a paper on these two passages, and a famous Pāli scholar, after having read the summary, did not come to hear me but went on telling people around him, who knew no Pāli, that I did not understand the Pāli texts. Perhaps he believed that V.

^{1.} On the reading see K.R. NORMAN, "An Epithet of Nibbāna", Śramaṇa-Vidyā: Studies in Buddhism. Professor Jagannath Upadhyaya Commemoration Volume I (Sarnath, 1987), pp. 23-31 (Collected Papers III, Oxford, Pali Text Society, 1992, pp. 183-189).

^{2.} Majjhima-Nikāya I, pp. 329-330 (Brahmanimantanika-sutta). The editions of Pāli texts quoted here are those of the Pali Text Society.

^{3.} Dīgha-Nikāya I, p. 223 (Kevaddha [Kevaṭṭa]-sutta).

Trenckner, while editing the first volume of the *Majjhima-Nikāya* in 1888, was right in attributing the words of the Buddha to his adversary, despite the fact that this attribution has led to the following picture of the Buddha - not too glorious for the Omniscient:

... the Buddha did not attack the concept of *vijñāna* by polemics; he overpowered Brahmā in another way, namely by the use of supernatural powers⁴.

Perhaps he thought, with other scholars, that the word viññana used twice in the $D\bar{\imath}gha-Nik\bar{a}ya$ passage refers to the same entity. Finally, he thought perhaps that it was not even necessary to relegate these passages - which apparently set forth an Upaniṣadic doctrine - to a "precanonical" or "pre-Hīnayānistic" Buddhism, as St. Schayer did⁵.

Be that as it may, I have written on the subject⁶, and, as could be expected, my work has had no impact at all on later studies. For reasons not quite clear to me, Étienne Lamotte cited the *Dīgha-Nikāya* passage to explain a passage of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (*Upadeśa*), which puts forward a view that is attributed to the *ekaccasassatikā ekacca-asassatikā* in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya*⁷. More recently, Steven Collins, in his book *Selfless persons*, has discussed at some length the *Kevaddha-sutta* passage; and, given the extraordinary character of his observations, I wish to make a comment on them.

^{4.} HAJIME NAKAMURA, "Upanişadic Tradition and the Early School of Vedānta As Noticed in Buddhist Scripture", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18 (1955), p. 79. More on this in my Acharya Dharmananda Kosambi Memorial Lectures, 1997 (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1998).

^{5.} St. Schayer, "Precanonical Buddhism", Archiv Orientální VII (1935), p. 131 (Selected Papers, edited by M. Mejor, Warsaw, 1988, p. 480); cf. C. Regamey, "Le problème du bouddhisme primitif et les derniers travaux de Stanisław Schayer", Rocznik Orientalistyczny XXI (1957), p. 48.

^{6.} L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (Paris, 1973), pp. 53-54 with the notes.

^{7.} E. LAMOTTE, Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse IV (Louvain, 1976), p. 2079. See my review of C.A. Scherrer-Schaub, Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti, in Journal of Indian Philosophy (Dordrecht) 22 (1994), p. 392; also L'Ātman-Brahman..., p. 13, n. 4.

Collins writes:

Although an enlightened man's consciousness is a karmic result, it is not limited by usual samsāric constraints. It is 'indescribable, infinite, radiant on every side'. We should not misinterpret this kind of consciousness as a 'cosmic consciousness', in the manner of the Vedānta picture of ultimate reality as sat-cit-ananda, 'Being-Consciousness-Bliss'. Rather, like the 'Widespread, far-reaching, immeasurable' mind with which the monk experiencing the Divine Abidings is endowed, and like the 'immeasurable mind' of a monk in the forth meditative stage, and like the sphere of Infinite Consciousness attained at the seventh stage, this consciousness will cease, at final nibbāna. When final nibbāna is attained, everything ceases, even those states and virtues which Buddhism itself holds dear. The passage I quoted earlier which spoke of the destruction of construction-consciousness by a stream-winner, says in the case of the Arhat: 'through the cessation of the last consciousness of an Arhat who is dying into final nibbāna-without-substrate, wisdom, mindfulness, and (all) name-and-form cease'. This 'last consciousness' is said to be a constructed-consciousness, and it is through the 'cessation by non-arising, in virtue of the non-arising' of this constructed-consciousness that nibbana becomes final...

And in a note he says:

Carimaka-viññāṇaṃ pi abhisaṃkhāra-viññāṇaṃ pi (DA. II. 393, commenting on the 'indescribable, infinite, radiant consciousness' of D.I. 223...)⁸.

A similar interpretation was given by O.H. de A. Wijesekera⁹. What is novel here is that Collins appeals to the Tradition to support his interpretation. But this reposes either on an intentional distortion or on a misunderstanding of Buddhaghosa's commentary.

For Buddhaghosa, the first word viññāṇa in the Dīgha-Nikāya passage, as the word viññāṇa in the Majjhima-Nikāya passage, does not mean "consciousness" at all, "constructed" or not; it is a "name for nibbāṇa" (nibbāṇassa nāmaṃ), in the sense that nibbāṇa is to be "preeminently known" or - as the Tīkā on the Sumangalāvilāsinī puts

^{8.} S. COLLINS, *Selfless persons* (Cambridge, 1982; reprinted 1990 and 1992), p. 207 and n. 22 (p. 296).

^{9.} O.H. DE A. WIJESEKERA, "The Concept of Viññāṇa in Theravāda Buddhism", JAOS 84 (1964), p. 258.

it - "known through a preeminent means"10.

And *carimaka-viññāṇaṃ* pi abhisaṃkhāra-viññāṇaṃ pi does not gloss the first *viññāṇa*, but the second *viññāṇa*. It is when this phenomenal consciousness ceases that all the empirical realities - the four elements, the antinomies, individuality - cease in *nibbāna*:

...tattha viññātabban ti viññāṇam. nibbānassa tam nāmam...

ettha āpo cā, ti ettha nibbāne. idam nibbānam āgamma sabbam etam apo tiādinā nayena vuttam upādinnaka-dhammajātam nirujjhati appavattam hoti.

idāni tassa nirujjhanupāyam dassento viññānassa nirodhena etth' etam uparujjhatīti āha. tattha viññānan ti carimaka-viññānam pi abhisamkhāra-viññānam pi...¹¹

In his eagerness to isolate Buddhism from the Upanişadic tradition, Buddhaghosa explains away *viññāṇa* in the two passages.

But to the impartial reader it will appear that the doctrine set forth, especially in the $D\bar{\imath}gha$ - $Nik\bar{a}ya$ passage, is the same as that of Yājñavalkya in the $B\underline{\imath}had\bar{a}ra\underline{n}yaka$ - $Upani\underline{\imath}ad$. In the universal and absolute Consciousness, all the empirical realities, including individuality, cease to exist, and they cease when the empirical consciousness has ceased. One may recall the passages of the $B\underline{\imath}had\bar{a}ra\underline{n}yaka$ where Yājñavalkya talks about the $\bar{a}tman$ as a "homogeneous mass of consciousness without inside and outside" (anantaro 'bāhyaḥ kṛtsnaḥ prajñānaghana [vijñānaghana] eva) and at the same time says that "after Liberation there is no consciousness" (na pretya sanjñāsti)¹². By

^{10.} Sumangalavilāsīnī II, p. 393. Cf. Papañcasūdanī II, p. 413. — viñītātabban ti visiļļhena ñātabbam, sabbañāņuttamena ariyamaggañāņena paccakkhato jānitabban ti attho. Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathāṭīkā I, p. 512. The Ṭīkā on the Papañcasūdanī (edited in Burma and recently in India) is not available to me at this moment.

^{11.} Sumangalavilāsinī II, p. 393. At the end Buddhaghosa refers to the Mahāniddesa, which may be a mistake for Cullaniddesa: see Collins, op. cit., pp. 206, 207 with the notes 15 and 21 (pp. 295, 296); also my review of Scherrer-Schaub in Journal of Indian Philosophy 22 (1994), p. 392. Note that abhisamkhāra-viññāṇa is not a gloss of carimaka-viññāṇa as Collins thinks, but refers to a different type of consciousness – "constructive-consciousness".

^{12.} Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad IV, 5, 13; cf. II, 4, 12. - I find a great deal of confusion in K. R. Norman's paper "Aspects of early Buddhism", Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka, edited by David Seyfort Ruegg and Lambert Schmithausen (Panels of the VIIth World Sanskrit Conference. General Editor: Johannes Bronkhorst, Vol. II.

samijnā here is to be understood, of course, as Śańkara makes it clear, viśeṣasamijnā or viśeṣavijnāna, "particular (individual) consciousness".

And, so far as I am concerned, I do not see anything in the Pāli Canon that contradicts the doctrine recorded in the two passages.

Leiden, 1990), p. 24 (Collected Papers IV, 1993, p. 124). See, however, K. Bhattacharya, L'Ātman-Brahman..., p. 45, n. 3, pp. 48 ff.

On pretya here - "after Liberation", and not "after death" - see L'Ātman-Brahman.., p. 50-51. Also Sureśvara, Brhadāranyakopaniṣadbhāṣyavārttika (Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series 16, Poona, 1892-94), p. 1106, st. 437; Pārthasārathimiśra on Kumārila's Ślokavārttika, Ātmavāda 147.